

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 002228

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CEN, WHA/EPSC, DRL/IL, AND EB
STATE PASS USAID FOR LAC/CAM (LLIBANATI)
TREASURY FOR DDOUGLASS
LABOR FOR ILAB
GUATEMALA FOR COMMATT MLARSEN AND AGATT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SOCI](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: HONDURAS OUTLAWS WITCHCRAFT -- SORT OF

1. In a regulatory announcement ("circular") issued by the Ministry of Interior and Justice, Minister Roberto Pacheco Reyes instructed Honduran mayors in the application of Article 148 of the Law of Social Harmony ("Convivencia Social") in matters of "fortune tellers, quacks, and any person abusing the public trust." The law established a two tiered system of fines for violations: less serious infractions -- defined as those that arise from responsible actions or negligence -- are subject to fines ranging from 300 to 500 lempiras (USD 16 to 26). More serious crime -- repeated offenses and those arising from fraud -- are subject to fines ranging from 500 to 5000 lempiras (USD 26 to 263).

2. The promulgation of this regulation was quickly picked up by media outlets, who characterized it as a crackdown on witchcraft in the countryside. While Honduras is an overwhelmingly Catholic country, there is a long tradition in the countryside of folk healers, fortune tellers, and other occult practitioners (referred to generically as "brujos").

3. The new regulation does not appear to be an attack on Wiccan religious custom, and does not appear to constitute a violation of freedom of religion. Rather, as the circular makes clear, it is primarily a consumer protection measure. The circular's preamble reads, "Aware of numerous complaints filed with this Ministry by many persons claiming to be the victims of fraud or trickery by persons practicing witchcraft or folk healing and who, taking advantage of the public's ignorance and inexperience, lead them to believe that they will solve their problems, we therefore find it necessary to request that the municipalities of the country take the following actions to prevent the citizenry from falling prey to such illicit schemes." The circular goes on to say that municipalities may impose fines against "anyone who, for profit, seeks to interpret dreams, perform divination, predict the future, perform magic healing, or in any other way abuse the public trust."

Williard
Williard